

Blue Ribbon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Task Force | www.rco.wa.gov

April 9, 2014 Meeting Summary

The Task Force successfully launched in March and hosted the first of six meetings on April 9 at the Cherberg Building on the Olympia capitol campus. The objectives were to introduce Task Force members, staff and consultants; hear from the Governor about his expectations; discuss Task Force roles; hear from partner agencies; review state laws that pertain to government committees; set up organizing rules; and plan future meetings.

The meeting was well attended: Gov. Jay Inslee set the forward-looking tone with his opening remarks, encouraging full engagement of members, stakeholders and staff. Fifteen of the 17 voting members participated (Dan Nordstrom and Louise Stanton-Masten were unable to attend), along with all 12 non-voting members and 34 members of the public. Six people gave public comment. Visit the [Task Force web page](#) for meeting materials, the TVW webcast, and upcoming meeting dates.

Key Outcomes

- Key topics and themes identified for upcoming Task Force meetings
- Four Subcommittee topics confirmed: (1) economic development, (2) get more people outdoors, (3) meet future recreational needs, and (4) state role in providing outdoor recreation
- Subcommittee member participation discussed
- Six stakeholders provided public comment

Governor's Opening Remarks

Governor Inslee arrived early to visit with members and citizens before the meeting, then set the tone for this six-month engagement with his opening remarks. He asks the Task Force to help achieve three goals:

1. In light of lost parks and recreation funding, infrastructure and staff resources, **figure out how to put our state parks on a stable, sustainable course for next 100 years** in a way that provides universal access. This is a heritage issue.
2. **Maximize the potential of our parks and public infrastructure to get more people outside** and generate increased recreation and tourism revenue for the state. Washington's tourism industry offers a wealth of untapped opportunities and growth potential.
3. **Increase number of hours and days our children spend outdoors.** It's estimated that one third of our kids will be exposed to pre-diabetic conditions by the age of 35 unless something changes. Let's provide more exercise opportunities for kids.

Introductions & Context

Members introduced each other in an interactive activity led by Task Force facilitator, Chuck Lennox. Next, co-chairs, Barb Chamberlain and Doug Walker, led a review of the Charter and Rules of Conduct; all members present adopted the documents as is, with no changes. Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Director Kaleen Cottingham, RCO and Governor's Office staff, and agency partners then provided context through a series of presentations (see [Task Force web page](#)):

- Executive Order 14-01, establishing the Task Force
- Administrative details
- Existing studies and research
- State outdoor recreation programs and funding
- Local parks and outdoor recreation programs

Public Comment

Karen Daubert, Washington Trails Association: I urge the Task Force to think broadly, creatively. Good news is that more kids are getting outside. We have seen a 10 percent increase in Washington Trails Association volunteer hours every year—more youth are becoming involved. When I consider what outdoor recreation means to me, I think “connections”.

Doug Levy, Outcomes by Levy: I helped get the Big Tent initiative up and running. Forming this Task Force is a watershed moment. Outdoor recreation equals: incredible range of business opportunities; public health benefits; alternative transportation business opportunities; crime prevention; and tourism. We need to do a better job of capitalizing on business opportunities and increasing economic development. We need to leverage and promote our amazing outdoor assets. The access question is important. We also need to consider funding cuts and protecting existing funding. Task Force should consider ways to catalyze access, improve maintenance and operation of existing resources, and create an easily accessible process for public involvement.

John Gifford, Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association: Task Force should represent winter sports and consider issues associated with this particular type of outdoor recreation. This billion dollar industry accounts for 76,000 annual jobs and is a significant economic driver in Washington state.

Debbie Emgee, City of Snohomish: The city of Snohomish is interested in partnering with the Task Force.

Jim King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation: I'm skeptical that we'll only get a report out of this process. Legislative non-voting members are key to the Task Force to help with buy-off and creating momentum. The Task Force needs user-group buy-off. There are a wealth of user-groups in the state and they need to feel ownership of Task Force recommendations. For example, Puget Sound is the number one location for scuba diving. Learn the history and build on what's already been done—the Task Force is just writing the latest chapter; this effort isn't new. Kids are key in this effort.

Sarah Mendonca, citizen: Utilize the Millennials! We are ready to recreate and spend!

Planning Upcoming Task Force Meetings

Facilitator Chuck Lennox lead a discussion about issues members would like to consider and learn more about at future Task Force meetings. The following was captured on flip charts:

For Further Consideration & Discussion

- How to integrate the issues
- State's role in liability issues
- Barriers to recreation – permitting, regulations, liability
- How to provide support (recreation, economic development, etc.) for Oso area?
- Definition of outdoor recreation
- Can we have a transformational approach – alternative narratives (reflecting voices of different recreational experiences from a broad perspective)
- Keep this central, framing question in mind as the Task Force moves forward: how do we define "outdoor recreation"? Our work begs that question and we haven't yet defined a shared understanding. A second item to consider: encourage everyone to look past and outside their agency boxes. The list of state roles is defined almost entirely by agencies and that is not how the average citizen thinks about recreation.

What do members want to learn?

Desired Topics and Outreach

- History of the issues
- Successful lessons learned about funding
- Tourism's role
- Engaging the tribes
- Outreach to diversify the voice for recreational needs
- Challenges to access
- How state agencies can (and do) collaborate with business and the private sector
- How can we reach out to other interests
 - Provide standardized methods/materials/language for this process
 - Gathering consistent information
 - Guidelines from RCO on talking points and feedback structure
 - Provide legal guidance about who/how we can talk to
 - How to direct people to feedback channels
 - Develop distribution lists for gathering feedback
- What are the budget implications of our recommendations
- Link the Heritage Community to outdoor recreation since heritage tourism is outdoors
- New ideas and innovation – what's out there
- Military families
- Non-traditional stakeholders
- Infrastructure's impact on outdoor recreation
 - Add Washington State Department of Transportation to the table – access to outdoor recreation and road conditions

- Elevate the issue
- Rethink how we provide services – Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Interpretation
- Relocation attraction – measuring quality of life index – Commerce testing a new tool
- Measuring our success
- Liability Issues
 - Whatcom County example – Department of Natural Resources
 - Access to water liability issues
- Marketing and information about outdoor recreation
 - Access for youth to adults
- Technology as a solution and a connection to different audiences
- Outlook (forecasting) for outdoor recreation – what are the trends

Proposed Subcommittee Topics & Themes

1. Economic Development

- Supporting the outdoor recreation industry
- Supporting rural and gateway communities
- Supporting urban communities (integrate throughout the subcommittees)
- Marketing: tourism, attracting new and relocating businesses, in-migration and quality of life, what already exists

2. Get More People Outdoors

- Getting kids outdoors
- Increasing participation of underserved populations
- Outdoor education
- The recreation and health connection

3. Meet Future Recreation Needs

- Funding + Capital Funding (integrate throughout the subcommittees)
- Meeting the needs of underserved populations
- Providing opportunities for a changing demographic
- Adapting to new trends in outdoor recreation
- Work with private landowners to expand opportunities

4. State Role in Providing Outdoor Recreation

- State Parks
- Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington State Department of Transportation – access to sites
- State role in local parks and communities
- State role in recreation provided by non-profit or private entities
- State role/relationship on federal recreation issues

Next Steps & Action

Co-Chairs

- Confirm subcommittee membership assignments
- Divide up subcommittees (two each) and check in with subcommittee chairs periodically to coach and mentor them through the process.

RCO & Consultant Partners

- Designate chairs for the three remaining subcommittees
- Distribute guidelines and timeline to subcommittees to help them get started
- Launch web forum for public engagement and comment
- Provide outreach materials for stakeholder group distribution

RCO Staff

- Confirm Task Force meeting dates and locations through September 2014
- Post meeting summary